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AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CONSUMERS

By Ray M. Hudson, Chief, Division of Simplified Practice.

Several publications of late have devoted editorial space to discussions which have an important bearing on the Simplified Practice Movement, and the responsibility of the consumer.

One, that of a banking institution, says in part: "Any practice, custom or method of consumption that tends to substitute the temporary for the durable is wasteful and extravagant. * * In other days houses were furnished to meet the needs of succeeding generations as well as those of the generations then living. Today the furnishings and decorations of our houses are changed almost with the season. These habits and customs are wasteful of materials, time and money. They are vastly more detrimental to progress than many of the other forms of extravagance to which our attention is frequently called. * * They either rob us of the leisure we might otherwise have, or deprive us of opportunities for devoting our time and endeavors in the direction of adding new and useful products to the list of those we now enjoy."

As if corroborating this comment, a leading hardware journal says: " * * All of the blame for the almost endless variety of everything cannot be placed on the retailer or manufacturer. * * It has largely been the wishes rather than the needs of the consumer that have helped boost costs * * "

However, there is an important effort being made through educational and other activities to check these wastes, another bank publication notes; and one result is that the American consumer is now striving to satisfy his desires for the artistic as well as the useful. This journal notes that "Concerted action by trade groups is developing to remedy waste, piracy and overproduction of certain styles. * * The movement sponsored by the Department of Commerce for Simplified Practice or the elimination of unnecessary types and patterns does not encroach on the art industries. Economies derived from reducing the varieties of nails, shovels and milk bottles will help American industry to balance the cost of design experiment in other lines."

The fact that to date nearly 300 consumer organizations have accepted Simplified Practice recommendations and that the adherence to 11 such recommendations in 1925 ranged from 64 to 99%--an average of 82%-- shows that the American consumer is awakening to the advantages accruing to him.

The educational influence of such groups as the National Association of Purchasing Agents, American Hospital Association, American Railway Association, with their thousands of members, is one which will leave its impact as the unorganized consumer recognizes the advantages his organized brother reaps through waste elimination.

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Elimination of 762 seldom-used sizes of valves and fittings and 18 sizes of wrought iron and wrought steel pipe and pipe fittings was adopted on May 28 at a conference of makers, distributors and users of this commodity. New production will become effective on September 1, and existing stocks will be reduced to the recommended sizes by January 1, 1927, the conference voted.

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Uniformity in size of "dealer helps", selling suggestions and advertising helps supplied by manufacturers, wholesalers and others, is urged by a reader of the "Hardware Retailer".

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Ox shoes forming part of an obsolete stock of one southwestern hardware dealer have been turned to sale as souvenirs of a past era in transportation.

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Sears, Roebuck & Co., and 53 other individual concerns as well as ten trade associations have accepted Simplified Practice Recommendations for tin and galvanized household ware.

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The California State, County and Municipal Purchasing Agents Association are holding their 9th convention at Los Angeles, and their program includes a study of Simplified Practice and waste elimination on behalf of the taxpayers.

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"Now the purchasing account on the larger systems is being reduced by amounts running into six figures by more care in inspection and holding for repairs quantities of material formerly sold for what a scrap dealer chose to bid", says a report on Waste reclamation by the Santa Fe Railroad system which shows savings for 1925, through reclaimed and repaired articles, of \$322,538.

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Manufacturers of plumbing goods, meeting with the Division of Simplified Practice on June 9th, were unanimously in favor of reducing the number of trap screw ferrules used in plumbing fittings, and indicated that the National Trade Extension Bureau might well accept sponsorship for such a program. The Bureau has been asked to do this in the interest of savings of time and expense to makers, master plumbers and home owner.

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Another evidence of international interest in Simplified Practice comes in a request from the Banco de la Nacion, Buenos Aires, Argentina, for information regarding methods employed and results obtained by the "waste elimination campaign". Dr. Alejandro E. Bunge, economic adviser of this great banking institution, has lectured in a number of colleges in the United States.

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Accepting Simplified Practice Recommendations on steel reinforcing bars and steel spiral rods, the Alamo Iron Works, of San Antonio, Texas, one of the southernmost supporters of Simplified Practice says of the former: "It is evident that the Simplified Practice as applied to this commodity has been of great assistance to all interests and has lowered costs." Of the latter it says: "It is our opinion that the schedule adopted is in every way adequate for all buildings, and as a result of the Simplified Practice costs will be materially lowered."

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A recent joint convention of the Southern Supply and Machinery Dealers association and the American Supply & Manufacturers Association in St. Louis recently adopted as two of nine recommendations to the distributors. "Get back of the Simplification Movement" and "Aim for Six Turnovers a Year." The former will help achieve the latter.

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In an exchange in is noted that the Pratt & Whitney Company are today using only nine classes of steel where five years ago this company used 24 types of steel.

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Cooperation in securing proper methods of cost accounting is being considered by 60 jobbing iron foundries in Los Angeles. Simplification of business documents and methods is gaining ground daily, as is shown by the adoption of the National Standard Invoice Form in eight plants of Joseph T. Ryerson & Son, Inc.

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The Lynchburg Foremen's Club, with 91 members from 29 different plants, has now created an "associate membership" admitting executives whose entrance fees are being used to secure expert speakers on industrial and managerial subjects. This club is studying simplification.

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Simplified Practice Recommendations as applied to bank checks and similar instruments has received sufficient formal acceptances to permit its being issued in the Elimination of Waste Series.

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The practicability of Simplified Practice Recommendations for brass lavatory traps was tested by a committee of seven experts on behalf of the City of St. Louis, whose code formerly required "crown vents" which were eliminated by the Recommendations. Proving that the elimination was well founded, the committee's report brought a revisal of the plumbing code. The report said: "We believe that these simplified methods will result in cheaper plumbing installations to the individual, but that the men who sell the material and perform the labor will find the total volume of business so increased as to more than repay them on the individual job."

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The National Standard Invoice Form is being used by 370 Railway supply houses.

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Use of Short length lumber in farm buildings is being studied jointly by the Purdue University department of agricultural engineering and a committee of lumbermen.

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The standing committee of the asphalt industry meeting on June 8, reaffirmed the Simplified Practice Recommendations which reduced the number of varieties from 88 to 9.

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Fifteen companies, including the Standard Oil Company of California, have been added to users of the National Standard Invoice Form, according to H. L. Kimball, chairman of the standardization committee of the Purchasing Agents Assn., of Northern California.

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The Bureau of Standards has issued, as Miscellaneous Publication No. 73, "Subject Index of Government Master Specifications" formulated by the Federal Specification Board. The "Chicago Purchaser" is sending this information to 5,000 purchasing agents.

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R. W. Sparks, deputy manager of the Policyholders Service Bureau of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company has been named as the official representative of the American Management Association for Management Week in place of Col. J. P. Jackson of the New York Edison Company.

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Two delegations of Britons from widely separated walks of life have recently made studies of American industry. One group included eight British workmen from engineering and mechanical trades, sent here by the London Daily Mail. The other included two Cambridge students. Among the conclusions noted by the first group, after traveling 5,000 miles and visiting many industrial centers, were: "A prompt acceptance by managers and men of time-saving and labor-conserving machinery; a continual search for new ways to cut costs; and an active spirit of teamwork." The latter group found the same state of affairs with the additional comment that: "America sticks to the principle of small profits and quick returns, and wealth is made by fine margins of profit on immense and rapid turnover; Rapid turnover is secured by simplification and cheapening of processes, which necessitates less capital for a given output; "and further that "Americans are vigilant and acute in eliminating waste and in conserving time energy and space." These viewpoints coincide with the report of a commission--previously mentioned--of the Federated British Industries as to the reasons for American prosperity.

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The International Electrotechnical Committee is working toward the development of standard nomenclature for electrical apparatus, and for a technical language for world use, the American Engineering Standards Committee reports.

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The California Manufacturers Association has received a wide number of replies from its membership interested in the more profitable use of waste material. Such material from one factory is often desirable raw material for another industry, and the Association is seeking to bring the two groups into closer contact.

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Simplified Practice Recommendations No. 44, on Box Board Thicknesses; No. 47 on Cut Tacks and Small Cut Nails, and No. 49 on Sidewalk, Floor and Roof Lights, have been issued by the Government Printing Office this Month.

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